

## Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-02

PA-02 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 ACDA-10 SAM-01

AID-05 IGA-02 IO-13 /082 W  
----- 040589

R 150644Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6498

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USIA WASHDC

INCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSMACHTAI BANGKOK THAI

UNCLAS BANGKOK 13828

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, MPOL, MILI, TH

SUBJ: EDITORIAL ON U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND

USIA PASS IEA

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF EDITORIAL FROM ENGLISH-LANGUAGE THE NATION MAY 15. (REFERENCE TO FORMER AMBASSADOR KINTNER ALLUDES TO KINTNER'S ARTICLE IN RECENT ISSUE OF ORBIS MAGAZINE, THE NATION MAY 14 REPORTED THAT THE KINTNER ARTICLE "PROPOSED THAT THAILAND SHOULD CONSIDER GRANTING RE-ENTRY RIGHTS TO THE UNITED STATES WHILE REDUCING, IF NOT ELIMINATING, U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE HERE.")

2. BEGIN TEXT THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THE FACT THAT THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE BEEN CLOSE FRIENDS FOR ABOUT THREE DECADES AND THAT THE FRIENDSHIP WILL CONTINUE. DURING THE PAST -- AND SE SPECIFICALLY REFER TO MILITARY REGIMES IN THAILAND WHICH LASTED FOR A LONG TIME -- THAILAND HAD ALL HER EGGS IN THE AMERICAN BASKET. TIME AND AGAIN, WE HAVE CRITICIZED THIS LINE OF APPROACH TAKEN BY THE THEN-MILITARY GOVERNMENTS. PARA NO COUNTRY IN THE WORLD HAS EVER GIVEN ANOTHER COUNTRY SO  
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MUCH FACILITIES TO WAGE WAR IN THE NEIGHBORING AREA, AS THAILAND

DID TO THE UNITED STATES WHEN THE WAR WAS HOT IN INDOCHINA. THAT THE AMERICANS LOST THE WAR IN INDOCHINA WAS NOT THE FAULT OF THAILAND, BUT IT WAS DESPITE THE FULL FACILITIES WHICH THAILAND GAVE THE U.S. PARA THE FIRST ELECTED GOVERNMENT TO HOLD POWER IN BANGKOK AFTER THE MILITARY REGIMES OF PIBUN, SARIT AND THANOM, CAME TO A VERY DEFINITE CONCLUSION REGARDING AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND. THE KHUKRIT PRAMOJ GOVERNMENT'S DECISION THAT THE U.S. MUST END ITS MILITARY PRESENCE HERE WAS NOT ONLY FINAL BUT WON PUBLIC ACCLAIM. ANY TINKERING WITH THE FINALITY OF THAT AGREEMENT WILL ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO SNOWBALLING PUBLIC SUSPICION AMONG THE PEOPLE. PARA BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, WE SEEM TO HAVE LOST THE LOGIC OF THE WHOLE SITUATION. OF WHAT USE IS AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND TO THE THAIS OR TO THE AMERICANS? EVEN IF WE ARE INVADDED BY A COMMUNIST COUNTRY, AMERICAN TROOPS CANNOT HELP US BECAUSE THE U.S. CONGRESS WILL NOT ALLOW IT. FOR THAILAND, THEIR PRESENCE SEEMS TO BE ONLY A THORN IN THE SIDE, BECAUSE WE BECOME THE TARGET OF CRITICISM FROM OUR NEIGHBORS. PARA CERTAINLY, ALL THIS MUST HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED WHEN U.S. AMBASSADOR CHARLES WHITEHOUSE HAD HIS LONG MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTR PHICHAIRATTAKUN. IT IS IN THE CARDS THAT THE PROPOSAL MADE EARLIER BY FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR WILLIAM KINTNER AND PUBLICIZED BY THE NATION ALSO CAME UP FOR DISCUSSION. WE ARE SPECIFICALLY REFERRING TO THE PERMISSION THAT THE U.S. SHOULD GET FROM THAILAND RE-ENTRY RIGHTS. AGAIN WE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND WHY, AND WHAT CONTINGENCIES, IT WILL BE BENEFICIAL TO THAILAND OR THE U.S. TO RE-ESTABLISH A MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. PARA THERE IS ONLY ONE INSTANCE WE CAN THINK OF AND THAT IS THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT. WHEN CAMBODIA CAPTURED THE U.S. FREIGHTER MAYAGUEZ, THERE WAS SUCH AN UPROAR IN THE U.S. THAT U.S. MARINES WERE LANDED TO UTAPAO AIRBASE AND THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY HELI-LIFTED TO THE WRONG CAMBODIAN ISLAND, AFTER THE CAMBODIANS HAD FREED BOTH THE SHIP AND THE CREW. OF COURSE THAILAND WANTS NO MORE OF THIS. IN NO OTHER SITUATION COULD WE EVEN VAGUELY FORESEE THE NECESSITY FOR THE RE-ENTRY OF AMERICAN TROOPS TO THAILAND. PARA UNTIL THE ELECTED KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER, THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE U.S. WERE BASED MORE ON UNCLASSIFIED

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EMOTIONALISM THAN REALITY. IT IS HIGH TIME THAT BOTH COUNTRIES EVALUATE THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION AND BASE THEIR RELATIONSHIP ON THAT SOLID FOUNDATION. PARA THERE ARE RUMORS, OR SHALL WE SAY BELIEVABLE RUMORS, THAT THE DEMOCRAT-LED COALITION IS TRYING TO VEER AWAY FROM THE FINALITY WHICH THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT IMPOSED ON THAI-AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS. IF THIS GOVERNMENT EVEN CHANGES ONE IOTA OF THAT AGREEMENT, IT WILL ONLY EXPOSE

ITSELF AS A PAWN OF THE MILITARY HIERARCHY, END TEST  
WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY BASES, FORCE & TROOP LEVELS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 15 MAY 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** n/a  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976BANGKO13828  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760189-0925  
**From:** BANGKOK  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760550/aaaabqrv.tel  
**Line Count:** 117  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** CollinP0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 13 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <13 JUL 2004 by wolfsd>; APPROVED <18 JAN 2005 by CollinP0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** EDITORIAL ON U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND USIA PASS IEA  
**TAGS:** MARR, MPOL, MILI, TH  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006